



County of Erie

CHRIS COLLINS
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ANTHONY J. BILLITTIER IV, M.D., FACEP
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

HEALTH UPDATE #288

October 21, 2011

Health Update: Erie County Sentinel Respiratory Surveillance

Please distribute to Emergency Departments, Infection Control Departments, Employee Health Services, Infectious Disease Departments, Pediatrics, Director of Nursing, Medical Director, Pharmacy, Laboratory Director and all patient care areas.

The Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) is beginning its third year of active respiratory surveillance in Erie County and surrounding regions of New York State. State and local public health laboratories routinely conduct surveillance to monitor for currently circulating and new flu strains followed by results reporting to CDC. This information is used to develop the vaccine for the following year and to shape the public health response in the current year. Specimens are forwarded to public health laboratories by clinical labs, community providers, or other healthcare institutions for subtyping using CDC-approved testing methods. This is particularly important early and late in the season to determine if flu has emerged/is diminishing in local communities.

ECDOH is currently recruiting interested medical practices to participate in our respiratory surveillance program for the 2011-2012 season. Participants will be asked to submit up to 10 respiratory specimens per week using collection materials provided by the Erie County Public Health Laboratories. This program will include diagnostic Influenza testing including subtyping, as well as, surveillance-based testing for several non-influenza respiratory pathogens such as RSV, Parainfluenza virus, Metapneumovirus, and Adenovirus. Test results will be provided at no cost for Influenza testing on each specimen. Non-influenza respiratory testing results will be provided as aggregate surveillance data for each practice to indicate circulating pathogens.

The surveillance system was an effective tool during the 2009 H1N1 Influenza pandemic. Ongoing respiratory pathogen surveillance assists healthcare providers, health departments, and institutions in their planning and management activities associated with communicable respiratory diseases. This demonstrates the critical importance of this public health laboratory function in protecting the public's health. The public does not often hear about surveillance but its value cannot be overstated.

If your practice is interested in participating or you would like to request additional information, please contact the Erie County Public Health Laboratories at 716-898-6100 or at ecphl@erie.gov. Please feel free to forward this information to any colleagues that you think may be interested in participating in this surveillance program.

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary

The Erie County Department of Health does not provide medical advice. The information provided on the Erie County Department of Health website is not an attempt to practice medicine and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is for informational purposes only. Always seek the advice of your personal physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or issue. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of the content found on the Erie County Department of Health website or this correspondence.

The ECDOH Health Alert & Advisory System is an e-mail notification system designed to alert community partners about important health related information. **You can sign up to receive alerts & advisories at www.erie.gov/health/services/health_professionals.asp.**